

## Message Text

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42

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

TRSE-00 COME-00 EB-07 SSC-01 /064 W

----- 055375

R 090745Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6711

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 5548

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SN

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PAP

REF: EMBASSY'S A-34

1. ALTHOUGH INFORMATION ON THE CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP OF THE PAP HIERARCHY IS NORMALLY CLOSELY HELD, THE STRAITS TIMES DECEMBER 8 REPORTED THAT ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES DR. LEE CHIAW MENG AND THE FORMER MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, YONG NYUK LIN, DID NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION TO THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PAP AT A RECENT COMMITTEE MEETING ATTENDED BY 310 PAP CADRES.

2. THE TIMES ARTICLE SAID THAT TAN ENG LIANG AND TANG SEE CHIM, BOTH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND HOLDING RESPECTIVELY THE POSITIONS OF MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, WERE ELECTED TO REPLACE DR. LEE AND YONG. ARTICLE CITED SOURCES AS SAYING THAT DR. LEE'S DEPARTURE FROM THE CEC WAS CERTAIN TO SPARK OFF SPECULATION ABOUT HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES IN THE IMMEDIATE YEARS AHEAD. SOME CADRES WERE REPORTEDLY TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND WONDERED IF HIS POSITION IN THE CABINET MIGHT ALSO CHANGE. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOTED THAT A CABINET MEMBER NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE A MEMBER OF THE 14-MAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. (MINISTER OF FINANCE HOM SUI SEN IS THE ONLY MEMBER OF

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THE CABINET WHO IS NOT ON THE CEC).

3. COMMENT: YONG'S DEPARTURE FROM THE CEC COMES AS NO SURPRISE SINCE HE WAS DROPPED FROM THE CABINET IN MID-1975 FOLLOWING WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF THE SINGAPORE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM. DR. LEE'S DEPARTURE WILL NOT ONLY STIMULATE SPECULATION ALONG THE LINES INDICATED IN THE ARTICLE, BUT WILL ALSO FEED RUMORS THAT THERE IS CONTINUING FRICTION WITHIN THE PAP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND ENGLISH EDUCATED ACTIONS. ACCORDING TO ONE UNCONFIRMED SOURCE, THE RECENT DELAYS AND HESITATIONS IN ANNOUNCING THE ELECTION DATE WERE OCCASIONED BY DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO FACTIONS OVER WHICH MPS SHOULD BE DROPPED TO MAKE WAY FOR NEW BLOOD.

4. DR. LEE CHIAW MENG WAS APPOINTED IN MARCH 1975 AS VICE CHANCELLOR OF NANYANG UNIVERSITY WITH A VIEW TO BREAKING NANYANG OUT OF ITS DISTINCTIVE CHINESE MOLD AND MOVING IT TO A POSITION OF EQUALITY WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE. IN CARRYING OUT THIS RESPONSIBILITY DR. LEE MOVED SO ABRUPTLY THAT HE OFFENDED SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE-EDUCATED ELITE. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS, THE PRIME MINISTER KEPT HIM ON AS MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, BUT MOVED HIM TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO ASSIST DR. GOH. AT THE TIME THERE WAS SPECULATION THAT DR. LEE WOULD ULTIMATELY REPLACE DR. GOH IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE FOLLOWING THE GENERAL ELECTION AND ENSUING CABINET RESHUFFLE. (SEE SINGAPORE 3900). HOWEVER, THIS SPECULATION HAS FADED WITH GROWING AWARENESS THAT DR. LEE HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF RATHER STRONG CRITICISM FROM CHINESE EDUCATED MEMBERS OF THE PAP FOR HIS HEAVY HANDED ACTIONS AT NANYANG.

5. ALTHOUGH HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE CEC WILL UNDOUBTEDLY RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, DR. LEE IS A BRIGHT, AGGRESSIVE OFFICIAL WHO HAS AT TIMES BEEN MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER. HE MAY BE DOWN BUT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO COUNT HIM OUT. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE STRAITS TIMES ON DECEMBER 8 ALSO CITED SOURCES AS INDICATING THAT BOTH DR. LEE AND YONG WILL BE NOMINATED BY THE PAP TO RUN AGAIN FOR PARLIAMENT.

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HOWEVER, THIS MUST AWAIT OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION ON NOMINATION DAY.

6. THE ELEVATION OF TANG SEE CHIM AND TAN ENG LIANG TO THE CEC IS UNLIKELY TO EVOKE MUCH COMMENT OR REACTION. TANG, A LAWYER AND THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, IS A PAP STALWART WHO HAS SERVED AS ACTING ORGANIZING SECRETARY OF THE PAP SINCE 1967. HE ALSO SERVED BRIEFLY

AS BOTH PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF STATE  
IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. A QUIET WORKER RATHER THAN  
AN INNOVATOR, HIS ELCTION TO THE CEC IS MORE A TRIBUTE  
TO HIS SOLID COMPETENCE, LOYALTY AND RELIABILITY THAN  
TO BRILLIANCE OR OUTSTANDING QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP.  
TAN ENG LIANG IS A BRIGHT, AGGRESSIVE YOUNG COMER WHO WAS APPOINTED  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAST CABINET  
RESHUFFLE. HIS ELECTION TO THE CEC IS CONSISTENT WITH  
THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONTINUING EFFORT TO PROMOTE A  
SECOND GENERATION OF LEADERSHIP.  
HOLDRIDGE

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